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FOR THE YOUNG

WHEN a man of over seventy addresses primarily young people of sixteen to twenty-two, the task cannot but be onerous. The Past speaks to the Future. A high seriousness, arising from the perception of life as a running stream perpetually renewing itself, is bound to be present. Accordingly it is proper to begin with an apology for disturbing one's audience amidst its Republic Day festivities. You have to live; I have lived. Perhaps then you will not mind, may even like, hearing a word or two from one who has travelled the path before you.

Since Independence we in this land have accepted economic development as almost our sole goal. It has become the Utopia of our desires. Nothing has been more thought of, more talked and written about, more sought after, more worked for (by right policy and method or wrong) than economic development. Scarcely ever have we stopped to view with care and discrimination, conditions in the countries which have attained and surpassed this goal we pant to reach. Consider the two most affluent human societies in the world, the United States and Sweden. The living standards of their people are high beyond belief, but are their people at peace within themselves? Is the quality of their lives commensurate, even in their own thinking, with the value of the goods they own and consume, the power of the physical forces they control? Have they overcome the fear of the inevitable unknown, of the darkness into which we all must pass? Have they become by and large good human beings, animated more by justice, mercy, kindliness, courage, sensitivity to beauty than other peoples? Are their young happier, their old more serene? Are their great men wiser, their scholars more blessed with true insight? Alas, no.

Being human, one notes this with sorrow, for it shows the unlikelihood of an approach for people even in very favourable conditions to the quality of life to which beings endowed as we all are should be capable of rising. And when you turn to Japan and Germany, with their economic miracles, is the tale different? No, riches galore in physical terms; for the rest, nothing remarkable. Hardly anything need be said in this connection about the powerful Communist countries, for there whatever affluence is attained is so covered by the lack of freedom for the people that life as a whole can only be nasty and brutish.

Thus then it appears that economic development is scarcely the panacea so many of us have so firmly held it to be. Not that it is not desirable, especially for our country with our poverty-stricken masses, but that it cannot be the be-all of life or the end-all of misery. Would you be truly human, men and women not only of flesh and blood but also of thought and spirit, you must attain a sense of proportion in regard to it, whether it relates to yourselves personally or to the nation as a whole. Poverty and riches are to be found not just in the material world; they are also attributes of the spirit, and in your journey through life

you will find poverty of spirit a far greater handicap than material poverty. If then you would be happy, at peace within yourself, standing foursquare to all the world, you must discard utterly the poverty of spirit that, however well-endowed with worldly goods you may be, leaves you uncertain and trembling, your mind and heart at the mercy of every strong wind that blows through them.

How shall this degrading poverty of spirit be banished, and its place filled with the rich elixir of courage? The answer is simple; by making yourself fully conscious of the transitoriness of life and of all worldly things. Let the vivid feeling of that sink deep into you, so that it is the background to all your thinking. Throughout our living, the world is indeed too much with us. Its attraction, often ignoble, seems to overpower all else. But the mind, strengthened by this background, finds little difficulty in resisting it. Not armed thus, it is often vanquished, and this though the manifestations of death cross our path regularly. Almost it seems in order to continue to lead the sordid lives many persons do, they put away from themselves the thought of death. They close their minds to it forcibly. They cannot face the idea that the common lot is bound to be theirs too. Oh no, they say suddering, it will not happen to me or at any rate not for many, many years, and so meanwhile for my own material benefit I live and the Devil take all else.

Consider, however, the very real advantages of the suggestion above. If you have made the transitoriness of life the background to your thinking, the fear of dying, that is so often a heavy burden especially on the young, no longer oppresses you. Death becomes to you in a very real sense as natural as life. Whenever it comes, you are ready to depart. Again, the fear of the unknown no longer troubles you, since you have always fixed firmly in your mind that life being transitory it is perfectly natural that when it ends, if you still in any sense exist, you will go elsewhere. Further the normal conduct of the affairs of life acquires for you a new significance. You judge afresh the glories of this world. Success, power, wealth all fall into their proper places in your estimation, good things well worth having, but not at the cost of meanness, cruelty, backbiting, bribery, flattery or any of the other degradations of that essential human dignity that distinguishes the man from the beast. In brief the great places, the large riches, the pleasing enjoyments do not prove to you insuperable temptations. You do not rush after them with heat and ardour. Coolly and with judgment you observe them and decide about them. On none do you fawn; none do you deceive or flatter or bribe or betray. Your life, whether you be poor or rich, has quality, and in your mind is a permanent defence against the grossness, callousness, envy that characterise so often not only those enthroned in the seats of power, political, financial, academic, but also those whose power is only over their own households. Is not then this idea of the impermanence of material existence and material things well worth cultivating as a permanent and useful friend? Whether your position be high or low, your work original or routine, your earnings massive or insignificant, it

will bring into your life an element of nobility that will be a powerful bulwark in the moments of crisis that no life can be without.

The Devil's Advocate will probably argue that this idea from its very nature must lead to inaction. If life is to be regarded basically as transitory and its rewards as impermanent, why bother to do anything in it at all? Better by far to rest, having done nothing before. To do anything worthwhile, one must act as if one were going to live for ever, said a French philosopher.

To which the answer is: Certainly act as if you were going to live for ever. That need not prevent you from knowing quite well that you are not and having that as the groundwork of your thinking. In human beings moreover, at every stage and of every kind, there is an impulse, a feeling, a knowledge, a compass, call it what you will, that we term conscience. The pole-star to which this compass points is the Right, and the Right demands from man effort, and more particularly effort for the benefit of others. The first prayer of a very old religion followed perhaps by the smallest group in our country says 'that is the highest virtue, which is virtue for the sake of virtue alone.' And a famous prayer of another very old religion followed by the largest group in our country says

> But thou, want not, ask not, find
> Full reward of right in doing right.
> Let right deeds be thy motive, not the
> Fruits thereof; and live in action, labour,
> Make thy acts thy piety, contemning gain
> And merit, equable in good and ill.

Here then is the second ingredient for your happiness. Combined with the first and tempered by a sense of humour, it can be your shield and buckler against the ills of life. Its elements are simple: doing the Right because it is the right, not because of any outside gain or advantage that may come from it; continuous industry; equability of temperament whatever the circumstances. Difficult? What that is worthwhile, is not? But not too, too, difficult, if you determinedly break yourself to it. And the quiet richness of spirit that seeps through of its own accord, who can put a value on it? Two further points it is desirable to bear in mind. In some who do right there appears a repining because of the nagging feeling that had they not done it their worldly condition would have been better. In others is present a jealousy of the prosperity of those who have abjured right-doing. Both these feelings are unworthy of the right doer. They show that his understanding of the principle on which he acts is incomplete, for right-doing is not for the sake of anything to come. Emphatically is virtue its own reward.

So on this Republic Day the Past wishes the Future the calm impregnation of its mind with the recognition of Life as it is, a temporary visitant to the human frame, and with the concept of Right-doing for its

(Continued on Cover III)

THE SNOWMAN

His hair were a spread
of pine-needles on his brow
his eyes red memories
of a dusk that bled
for passions young
lying littered with the dead.

Frost-fingers cold
caressed him into dreams
beneath him earth and autumn
were a Kneaded mould
of leaf and frost and flesh
upon his back
the winter-sun wrote gold.

April stole through
fractured ice on shacks
a slow movement on his face
a mouthless face changing to wax
looks turning lean eyes wet
and all the frozen tensions
turning lax
with pity inhuman
for the winter-slain
for loam-flesh whimpering
reborn to nerves and pain
for frozen desires
aching to the thaw
and limbs crying out again
for love. His eyes slurring
over the future saw
the fire-bird stirring
in his ashes and flashing
sunwards, foredoomed
to a burnt orbit.

The snow-gods
lift their winter-camp
at dawn
the snowman like a frozen tramp
stays on
with stance heroic
against a sun-curse
Time-granules crumble on his face
and he is gone.

K. N. Daruwalla

POVERTY (*Continued*)

D. R. GADGIL

THE present situation is due, in part, to the great change brought about by the technical revolution in the last quarter of a century. The most impressive way of stating the results of this technical revolution is that of saying that the world has significantly shrunk in size. Whether in terms of physical movement of men and goods or in the range of weapons and armaments or in terms of the transmission of concepts and ideologies an almost revolutionary change seems to have taken place during the last quarter of a century. It is now difficult for even large and powerful nations to suggest that they could live in isolation. It follows that most countries, especially those who aspire to the leadership of the world, have to give attention to problems of areas from which possible dangers can arise to their positions. The problem of the poverty and lack of development of a large part of the world is perhaps the biggest of such problems. It is natural, therefore, for leaders of the world and for international organisations to give increasing attention to world poverty.

The cumulative effect of rapid growth of advanced economies has further intensified the problem. The measure of difference between the rich and the poor even in the colonial 19th century was relatively small as compared with differences today. Also, this differentiation between the rich and the poor appears to be progressively increasing. It is clear that during the last three decades the progress of the gross national product of a number of advanced countries has been phenomenal and that as a result the distance between them and the under-developed countries has greatly increased, especially in absolute terms. This may be brought out by the following figures of relevant per capita income of, say, Japan and India. The per capita incomes of Japan and India in 1953 expressed in U.S. dollars at current prices were 183 and 59 respectively. The per capita incomes of the two countries in 1967 expressed in U.S. dollars at current prices were 921 and 75. Calculations available at constant prices show that between 1951 and 1964 the per capita income of Japan increased at the rate of 8.1 per cent per annum the corresponding rate for India being only 1.8.

The concern with the problem of poverty that has recently grown has led to some action on the international plane. Since the end of the Second World War, economic co-operation among countries has reached a much higher level than ever before. The establishment of the UN and of the IMF were among the first steps. The Marshal Plan was a notable attempt at rehabilitation of economies by international action. After the success of this plan had been assured, attention turned to problems of continents other than Europe. International organisations whose number continues

to grow, designed a number of programmes to help what were now called the under-developed countries and a number of advanced nations gave aid on bilateral terms also. The scope and extent of action has continuously extended. It no longer aims chiefly at relief of distress, as in previous times, but has meant support to long-term efforts of individual countries to develop their economies. In some of cases these efforts have proved remarkably successful. For the larger part, however, the results have not been striking. A number of factors have been held responsible for the relatively slow response in the developing economies. It has been said that this is due, in part, to the inadequate quantum of the aid and also to a number of conditions tied to the aid which make it very much less effective than it should be. The developing countries are now well represented in international organisations and have been conferring together to draw up targets and programmes for quanta of aid and types of other assistance which they would like the advanced countries to accept. For example, a target of 1 per cent of the GNP given as aid to developing countries has been set before the richer nations for being attained during the next few years. Demand such as of united aid or a number of tariff preferences has been made and progress is being made slowly in some directions.

It yet remains true that the gravity of the problem of poverty of the under-developed countries has not been materially lessened during the last two decades. The growth of population has been an important factor in keeping the rate of increase of per capita income low and the basic difficulty of the poor countries, viz. a paucity of resources in all directions has rendered rapid advance difficult. External aid has not only been inadequate or not on sufficiently liberal terms but also has often been given for military and other ends which deflect the attention of countries as well as valuable resources from economic development. For a proper understanding of the problem of poverty of the under-developed countries it is necessary, in addition, to take a view of their internal difficulties.

Modern times are characterised by a continuously increasing pace of the development of techniques of production. The changes brought about by the industrial revolution have been followed by progress in technology which has attained an amazing pace within the last few decades. This continuous change in the techniques of production has led to the evolution of a structure of socio-economic organisations adapted to the new technical situation. Recently, the pace of the change has been so considerable that it appears to have taxed the capacity to adapt of even the advanced industrial countries. During colonial rule in the under-developed countries there had been selective introduction of western innovations and ideas. Also, in most countries, the rule had the effect of disintegrating the older socio-political structure. The societies were thus rendered both less resistant and less adaptive than they had been before.

Further, the post-industrial revolution era in the advanced industrial countries has been the era through which nation States have been formed.

The nation state type now dominates the world, in practice as well as in theory, and the more successful of these national States are those that exhibit qualities of homogeniety and cohesiveness, discipline and aggressiveness. Modernizing the economy and making planned progress in underdeveloped countries involves not only the building up of the appropriate structure of socio-economic institutions but also the transformation of these countries into something like nation states.

The qualities required in a nation state or a modern developing country are usually absent in the under-developed areas of the world. This is fully examplified by the case of India. Modern India was not, except under colonial rule, a single unit of administration or political organisation. It has characteristics of a continent, is divided into many linguistic regions and has peoples of different faiths and ethnic groups living at widely separated levels of development of culture. The older organisation of Indian society provided for a general loose frame into which groups and communities could live at peace with others but with no compulsive movement towards integration with them. In such a society an immigrant group could settle and live and prosper in peace for centuries together without losing its identity of merging with the general community. In such a context the term general community had little significance. The society was a complex of specific communities or groups living in well-understood traditional relations with each other. Cohesion was strong within each group but there was little emphasis on the identity or cohesiveness of society as a whole. Such an organisation though well adapted to the needs of earlier times and making for survival is obviously not suitable in modern conditions.

In this context it may be useful to recall Myrdal's statement regarding Asian States being "soft". The criticism of Myrdal is perfectly valid in the sense that it is true that Asian States are unable to take firm, resolute, disciplined action in given directions even when leaders are convinced that such action is appropriate. This phenomenon has to be connected with characteristics which Asian States derive from the composition and structure of their societies. Imposition of discipline and resolute action imply a degree of cohesiveness and readiness among different social groups and strata to identify themselves with the general social good and this is lacking in these societies. It has been indicated by keen observers that democracy as it functions in India is too free. This again is related to the inability of anybody to enforce discipline. In a loosely organised society with numerous separate groupings and divided loyalties, attempts to impose rigour or discipline may lead, it is feared, to disintegration.

The older societies which were tolerant and hospitable and possibly because of the virtue of non-cohesiveness were non-aggressive, today prove anachronistic. They have to be replaced by cohesive nation States which are disciplined and in which enthusiasm for working towards common ends can be built up. They must acquire the attributes of dynamism and efficiency. These are extremely important in planned economic development. Planning requires common acceptance of distant goals and ends,

considerable agreement as to methods and procedures, the will and determination to work strenuously and persistently for planned objectives along pre-settled routes, efficient action by the State apparatus, and the ability, in a poor country, to impose sacrifices and hardships on the people or of the people to do this for themselves so as to achieve a distant end.

The difficult progress that the under-developed countries have to make is thus not only along the economic route but also along the socio-political. They have to undertake a transformation of their social organisation, create new bonds of cohesion and loyalty and have also to accept new values in the process. It should be remembered that the European peoples who are in the vanguard have themselves made these adjustments over centuries under favourable circumstances. The anciently settled under-developed countries are, on the other hand, faced with the problem of moving from one era into another within a matter of decades and to do this in circumstances which are highly unfavourable.

It may be doubted whether this compulsive trend towards making the potentially aggressive type of nation State universal, is in the real long term interests of the world. While dynamism and efficiency are no doubt desirable and beneficial it is equally necessary for world peace that States, in framing their programmes and policies, are not unduly influenced by considerations of short-term self-interest. However, in this matter of transformation the under-developed countries appear to have little choice. For progress, for sheer survival, they have to change many of their ways and have to follow, at least immediately, the trail blazed by the advanced countries. With a compact heavily interacting international community the range of choice open to an individual people, particularly in a weak and poor country, is very narrow. The large desirable changes regarding fundamental values and the operation of national and international organisations can come about only with wide acceptance, especially among the dominant nations.

It is clear that progress towards the eradication of poverty of under-developed countries, is unlikely to be rapid. Change is bound to be slow, internally and externally. In the meantime, with further technological advance, the inequalities between the poor and rich countries are bound to grow and international relations will be subject to greater strains.

Many features of the existing situation are due to the recent rapid advance of technology. It is also in the further advance of technology that hope for the elimination of poverty lies. Attaining a balanced population and making it possible for the much larger population to derive adequate sustenance from exploitation of available natural resources can both flow only out of further advance in science and technology.

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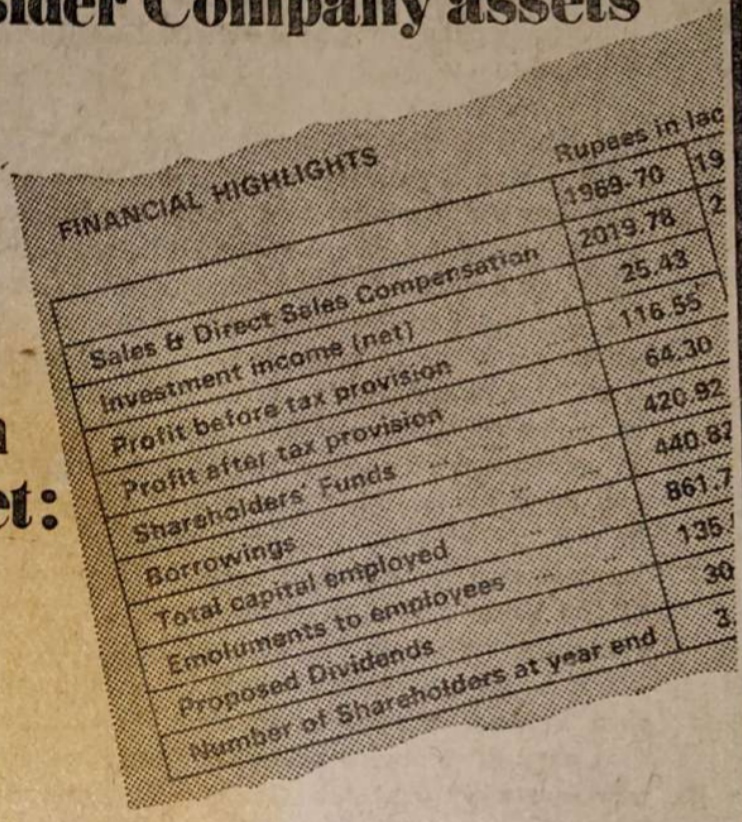

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THE C. P. I.

A. G. NOORANI

WHAT is the CPI up to these days? On the one hand, it praises Mrs. Gandhi to the skies; on the other, it openly declares that she and her party cannot lead India to progress. Now and then one comes across a pronouncement which sheds some light on this perplexing duality. Thus, on January 12, its Chairman, Mr. S. A. Dange, addressing the Press Club of India, said that he "saw no contradiction in the CPI seeking adjustments with the Congress(R) which he himself had earlier described as a slightly liberal version of a capitalist party of the bourgeoisie. It fitted in which the Communist pattern. Sometimes, a working class party had to combine with one section of the bourgeois party to defeat the worst bourgeois party. This was an ancient strategy of the Communist Party, he said" (*The Statesman*, January 13). This tells us a lot. But, in November a comprehensive and revealing exposition was made by a member of the Party's Central Secretariat, Mr. Avtar Singh Malhotra, in his pamphlet "What is the Communist Party?" What, indeed?

It is, he writes, "a class party, it is the political party of the working class". Since "the working class" is to have the dominant voice under the new set up envisaged by Communist doctrine and dogma, it is another way of saying that the Communist Party must be the Boss.

It is a party quite unlike a political party that ordinarily functions in a democracy. "When Lenin stressed that the party must be a party of a new type he was precisely underlining this aspect of the matter and demarcating sharply from the reformist parties that had abjured revolution, given up all preparations for revolutionary struggle and had, therefore, become incapable of it," Mr. Malhotra reminds his readers.

He adds, "Therefore, it is the indispensable rule for all communist parties that there is only one category of members, i.e., active members. Passive membership is taboo, there is no such category in any party constitution. The active members, of course, fall in two categories, full-time activists or professional revolutionaries, i.e., those who have no other calling or profession but party work, and part-time activists." Fellow-travellers also come in for honourable mention. "The communist party has sympathisers, i.e., those who only associate and help, but its membership must consist of those who belong, those who are conscious and active."

It seems a curious phenomenon of rigid adherence to doctrine and utter lack of scruples in tactics. "It is obligatory for every communist to study Marxist science—understand the ideology that has to guide all party activities." This science yields one conclusion at a time. "It means, firstly, that there is only one political line in the party. There are discussions, there may be sharp differences. But once a decision is taken—

even by a slender majority—it is binding on all. One single line is legal and binding—dissent is expressed at the stage of discussion and voting but not in implementation. Two lines are impermissible in the communist party." It matters not what falsehood we say so long as we all say the same falsehood, Communists seem to tell one another. "Abuse of party democracy to air and propagate one's own views, which are in conflict with the adopted party decisions" is liable to be punished with expulsion from the party.

Infallibility of the One Line is ensured by an infallible test—success. Writes Mr. Malhotra, "The weapon employed to make the necessary correction is that of check-up on the fulfilment of decisions and the rectification of errors and mistakes by criticism and self-criticism. This check-up is not on the basis of formal reports but on the basis of what has actually been done, which method alone gives an objective picture of the achievements and helps to uncover shortcomings and failures which is the first precondition for future improvement."

Mr. Malhotra does not cite any instances of the working of this test but, no doubt, his readers will easily recall some. In February 1966, the DMK was named, with some other parties, as "anti-national enemies of India's national-democratic revolution." By April 1967 things had changed. The DMK had swept the polls and formed a Ministry and the CPI's Election Review noted that "the communist movement is badly losing its base in Tamil Nad." So the February 1966 error was rectified by the infallible test of success and the CPI asked its followers in April 1967 to "work for building up closer relations with the DMK at all levels". Neither the DMK's character, nor the "science" of Marxism had changed. Only the dictates of expediency had changed from angry condemnation to ardent liaison.

From generalities about the Communist Party, Mr. Malhotra descends to the specifies of the Indian situation. "It was under Mahatma Gandhi's leadership and later that of Pandit Nehru that the Congress was transformed into a modern party, a mass party, a party waging mass struggles for the realisation of national aims, and serving as a united national platform and front to diverse classes and interests, though being controlled by the national bourgeoise and its political representatives." Gandhiji was a political representative of the bourgeoisie.

Mr. Malhotra admits the tactical mistakes of the CPI in the past, namely, opposition to the 'Quit India' campaign and the call to "armed insurrection" in 1948. These affected the Party a lot but it rallied and was well on the road to success until it split in 1964 and in 1967 again, giving birth to the CPI(M) and the CPI(M-L), respectively.

Where exactly does the CPI differ from its off-spring? It is not in regard to the latter's reliance on the use of violence but on their exclusive reliance on Violence. The CPI line, Mr. Malhotra avers, was laid down at the Amritsar Congress (1958). It was decided "that India need not necessarily go through a long civil war, that there was the possibility of peaceful transition to socialism which the CPI must strive to turn into

a reality. *But at the same time the possibility of non-peaceful path must also be kept in view.* The party must follow the Leninist behest of *mastering all the forms of struggle and being prepared for any twists and turns in the situation. The party also warned against interpreting the peaceful path as only Gandhian path or a parliamentary path,* as only requiring proficiency in fighting elections. The conception of the peaceful path included general strikes—on economic and political issues, demonstrations, statewide and all-India bundhs, land occupation and other militant land struggles, *even clashes with the forces of the state machine but short of a civil war.* While emphasising that parliamentary and extraparliamentary forms of struggle must be combined it stressed the primacy of the revolutionary mass movement, *which would be the main source of strength for the revolution,* whatever the path it may have to follow ultimately." In sum, it is purely a matter of expediency, not of principle, whether or not to use violence and unleash a civil war "ultimately".

Today, the CPI is having the best of both worlds. "The party has been leading the united front government in Kerala and also organising and leading militant mass struggles throughout the country. The combination of parliamentary and extraparliamentary forms of struggle is enhancing the role of the party and greatly strengthening the revolutionary mass movement. The party is strengthening its united front activities."

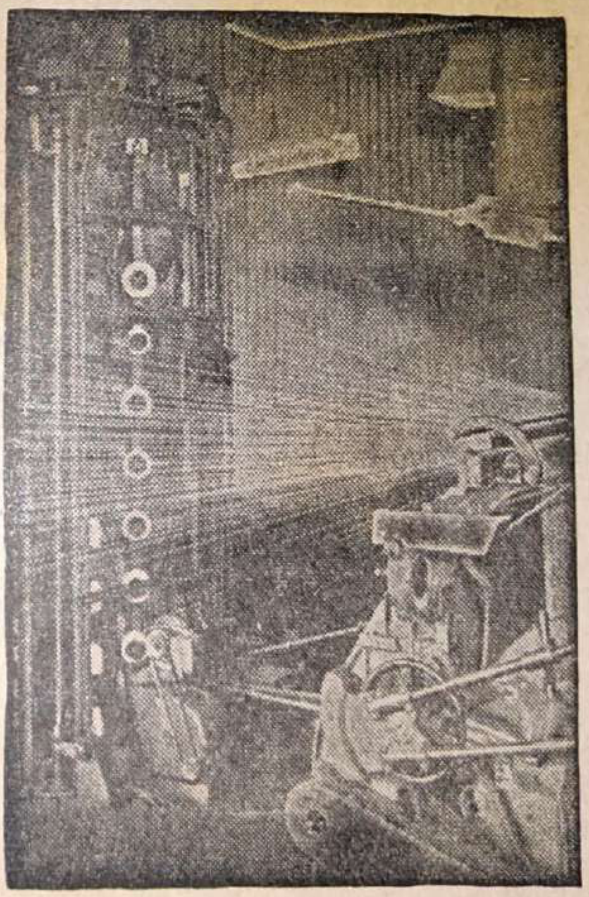
While challenging the Congress(O), Jan Sangh, and the Swatantra alliance, "it has also made the forthright declaration that 'no basic socio-economic changes can be expected from this government' (i.e. the Indira government). Therefore, the party wants to replace it by a 'government of left and democratic unity' which can be ushered in only through 'left and democratic unity and by a nationwide militant mass political movement for a decisive shift to the left'."

To leave no room for doubt, he goes on to stress that the goal of socialism "can only be achieved by a continuous revolution, a sweeping thorough real revolution that purges Indian society of all parasitic and oppressive elements and forces, *that turns it upside down and cleanses its Augean stables.* Such a revolution, a democratic revolution that quickly grows into a socialist revolution, *cannot be ushered in under Congress dispensation.* It can only come through a political revolution that increasingly makes the workers and peasants the sources and arbiters of real power in the country. It can only come through a revolutionary mass struggle in which the working class and the *Communist Party must play* the unifying, organising *and leading role,* that they only can play and without which the revolution will not find its destiny through all the twists and turns that must dog its steps". (Italics mine throughout.)

Thus, the goal of the CPI is the elimination of Mrs. Gandhi's rule and its present support to her is to the same end. The smallest sign of independence on the part of the Congress(R) upsets the CPI. "For the masses it will be no comfort to know that the Congress(R)'s electoral strategy is somehow to augment its own strength and secure a single party majority for itself in the new Lok Sabha". What the CPI wants is a

Congress (R)—CPI coalition in which the latter may begin as a junior partner but end up as the dominant one in the classic East European manner.

[Not much importance need be attached to occasional fraternal sullenness between Mrs. Gandhi and the CPI. As Philip Spratt says, "No doubt she sometimes quarrels with them ; but then they quarrel with each other". It is, in fact at the present time very much in the interest of Mrs. Gandhi that they should not appear really close to one another. Mrs. Gandhi's success in the election depends to a large extent upon the voter being deceived into holding that she will not get mixed up with the Communists, and follow Communist policies.—*Ed.*]



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THE SOCIAL EQUATION

TRINAYNI

I WAS casually watching the traffic on the Rash Behari Avenue from the balcony on the third floor, when suddenly there was a screeching sound of a car as the old man fell down before it while trying to cross the road. It all happened within a moment. The fault, I could clearly see, was not the driver's but of the man fresh from the village getting upset by the pace of the traffic. No sooner did this happen, people from all around rushed towards the driver, caught hold of him, began to beat him and dragged him out. Fists and kicks went wild from all sides till he was half-conscious and moaning and bleeding profusely.

Living in the locality for more than 20 years, I knew almost everybody among the neighbours. I could recognise Paltu, the panwala, Bindo the tea shop-owner, Shaila Sarkar the local club secretary, and many others. The injured man was lifted up in the car and despatched to the hospital and as the car left, the driver was given a few more slaps as a parting souvenir.

* * * *

Those were hard days. I and my partner Shyamacharan started our small firm of manufacturing padlocks. We had little capital and were assisted by only half-a-dozen workers. Both of us worked hard day and night but could hardly meet our personal needs. Our families had to be dependent on some help from the respective in-laws and therefore you can well imagine how peaceful was our homefront! Slowly, however, the business improved and sales grew in volume. I had no son but Shyamacharan had one. The boy grew up and joined the firm. Soon he picked up the work and he was sent abroad for training particularly at my insistence. He came back and joined work.

One day I fell seriously ill. After two weeks' absence when I joined work I was not allowed in! I was told by father and son both that I as a trespasser and was almost thrown out by the durwan—the same old durwan whom I had appointed. I returned home deeply wounded in spirit.

* * * *

Sanjoy lost his job after the Barrage Project was completed in the district of Mirzapur. For all these five years he had a comfortable life. He had married a nice looking graduate girl coming from a middle-class family and they had a son 3 years old. The loving care of the wife, her melodious Rabindra Sangeet and the sweet prattling of the boy had enveloped Sanjoy's emotional life with a charming ethereal air in the otherwise dreary unæsthetic environment of the box-like block of flats, one of which he was occupying temporarily. But the sack gave him a shock. He was wondering where else he could get a job. He was des-

perately applying for various jobs. But as their reserves shrank day by day, the tone of the wife's voice got shriller and shriller. Woe be on the man without income. Now nothing is good about him. He drinks too many cups of tea! Can he afford a smoke? Why does he need to mend his chappals? And all the rest of it.

It went on day after day and he wrapped himself up with the newspaper, pretending to go through the wanted columns. One day she tore apart the paper wall with a loud shrieking voice, and there instantly grew a wall more massive, more impenetrable. Sanjoy stared at her with a bare, vacant look.

* * * *

Daddy, Sister said Jesus Christ paid with his life for the sins of others, Shikha asked me on her return from the Loretto Kindergartens. Why should he die for *others'* sins?

Yes, I began to wonder too, why!

They = He = She = I. If I were in their position, I might have done the same thing. If I were in Shyamacharan's position, perhaps I might have also been tempted to behave as he did. If I were in the realistic situation that faced Sanjoy's wife with the prospect of starvation, who can say I would not have behaved similarly?

So let me not judge others. Let me understand and experience inwardly, and pay for the sins of others in addition to paying for my own.

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PLURALISM—A RESTATEMENT

G. N. SARMA

THEORIES of political obligation have, on the whole, been empty and unconvincing formulations of leisurely philosophers. There has been, and possibly can never be, a definitive answer to the question, "Why should I obey the State" or "Why and when may I disobey the state?" The obligation to disobey is the obligation of a situation of crisis and the citizen who is involved in the problem cannot consult manuals of political obligation for his guidance. He has to take a practical and urgent decision, make a quick but difficult choice. The theoretical justification of his choice may wait till the resolution of the crisis but his course of action has to shape itself according to the pressing realities of his situation.

"Times, and occasions, and provocations will teach their own lessons. The wise will determine from the gravity of the case; the irritable, from sensibility to the oppression; the high-minded, from disdain and indignation at abusive power in unworthy hands; the brave and bold, from the love of honourable danger in a generous cause. . . ." (Burke)

The idealist theory of obligation in its extreme form may be mentioned in particular as seeking to erect a unitary formula of obligation by merging the state and the individual in a single, undifferentiated partnership, where the individual is regarded as the micropolis, the reflection, on a small canvas, of the majesty of the whole. No theory of political and social obligation can be plausible if it does not maintain the distinction between the obligator and the obligated; the *to* and *from* of obligation must be seen as the two distinct but converging lines of conduct. If this distinction is blurred, obligation turns into compulsion and the voluntary character of individual action is abrogated. "A theory of obligation," as Mr. Walzer says, "must include a view of the consenting self; the person who incurs and carries the obligation has to be and continue to be a person of a certain sort, an autonomous and responsible man or woman." (193-194)

The author has throughout his book of essays on obligation maintained this distinction; he has, in using 'obligations' instead of the customary 'obligation' in the title, shown that he would deal with the problem from a pragmatic point of view and look at it in terms of circumstance and situation. Consent, which is the key to obligation, he says, has to be measured in all its dimensions—once consented, permanently bound, would be an insufficient explanation of adherence to a promise. "Liberty must be as extensive as the possible range of consenting action—*Over*

Michael Walzer. Obligations—Essays on Disobedience, War, and Citizenship, Harvard University Press, 1970. Oxford University Press, India.

time and throughout political space—if citizens can even conceivably be bound to a strict obedience." (Italics ours).

The sense of obligation, as the author looks at it, is acquired through willful membership. The degree of identification with the collectivity depends upon the size of the group and is bound to vary in inverse proportion. Thus, creative membership would be possible in a greater degree in secondary, face to face groups and in a very faint degree in larger groups like the State, where one's position is rarely the result of choice but may later on be reinforced by consent and participation. The possibility of conflict between the State and the Individual has thus a pluralistic basis, the more keenly felt obligation to the nearer group coming into clash with the faint obligation to the remote community. Conversely, when the smaller groups make total claims to the individual's loyalty a similar situation of conflict must arise. The pluralistic and liberal point of view is well summed up by the author: "The larger society can always recognize the claims of smaller groups and so relieve their members from the burdens and risks of disobedience. Indeed, the historical basis of liberalism is in large part simply a series of such recognitions." Disobedience, it would seem, is endemic in a liberal community and the character of such a community is measured by the degree of tolerance which it extends to its dissentents. The liberal community represents a nice balance of conflicting but not mutually destructive claims and excess on any side might imperil the very foundations of its equilibrium and sanity. It is a different matter when the different claims are contrary and antagonistic. Disobedience in such a context ceases to be civil and becomes revolutionary and incapable of being assimilated and transformed by the larger community.

The larger community, then, ought to hold out some value to the individual and ought to appear as something worth living for. The State denies the individual the right to commit suicide. The author considers in this connection the arguments of Aristotle and Blackstone and Castro's statement on the suicide of Augusto Martinez Sanchez as well as Trotsky's utterance at Yoffe's funeral after his (Yoffe's) suicide and adds that in the modern State alienation, absence of political meaning and associational responsibility form potent causes of suicide. He adds in the fashion of Voltaire, that to be obligated to live for a political community or for the king, or even for a Revolution is to have a very good reason for living in States.

"The freedom to die, whenever we feel like it is a freedom we can legitimately surrender, if not to the modern State, then up to some other group, which we can invent if necessary." (189)

The more intimate the group, the more intimate the sense of obligation. It is hard to escape feeling, however, that Mr. Walzer, like the familar pluralist, seeks to liberate the individual from the State and to raise the group against the State and the community. He adds that it should be ensured that corporate democratization ought to go along with State democratization and that the State should refrain from taking the

side of an undemocratic corporation against workers striking for democratic rights. The State should, in such a situation, delay action as long as possible for fear that it may throw its weight on the wrong scale, no matter even if the property rights of the corporation be violated! Respect for property rights, one would think, has been the foundation of the traditional liberal State and there is a danger that liberalism of this enthusiastic variety might carelessly lead to its very opposite. The author has drawn a distinction between civil resistance and revolutionary resistance but in such a situation the transition from the one to the other can be ever so easy. His prescription for action in a situation of crisis is, one fears, no different from the classical formula:

"I want to suggest that men have a prima facie obligation to honor the engagements they have explicitly made, to defend the groups and uphold the ideals to which they have committed themselves, even against the State, so long as their disobedience of laws or legally authorized commands does not threaten the very existence of the larger society or endanger the lives of its citizens." (16-17)

The activist is exhorted thus:

"That activists may pay attention to and be guided by the consciousness of the oppressed (even if they have to change that consciousness); that they must not despise concrete improvements in the condition of the oppressed (even if such improvements make their own work harder); that they must act so as to open up (or keep open) the possibilities of democratic action; these seem to me moral injunctions." (59)

He recognizes that the position of the activist in a democratic community is an agonizing one in which he is torn between his obligation to the oppressed minority and his obligation to the democratic community; how, that is, he can effectively press the claims of the oppressed without endangering the community in which the claims have to be realized.

Mr. Walzer's essay on conscientious objection is especially interesting as it fastens on the meaning of conscience as shared knowledge, shared (in privity be it noted) with the medieval church. With the Protestant Reformation the centre of conscience, says the author, shifted to the individual. It was in this profoundly separatist form that conscience was assimilated into modern liberal thought. One might, however, question whether even in its earlier sense conscience was really any more than an individual intuitive force. If it was shared with the medieval church it was shared in privity (O.E.D.). Perhaps the confession of a Christian before the Priest in confidence is sufficient indication that conscience was even then centred in the individual and was shared, if at all, with due regard for its privacy. That it was shared with another did not make it anything less or more. Later extensions of the concept of conscience to the group or the nation could be viewed as no more than a metaphysical exercise.

The author makes the illuminating observation that religious dissenters have been the main beneficiaries of the rights of conscience, for religious support is not as necessary to the modern State as military

support. "It is, on the surface at least, a little strange to find a democratic state allowing conscientious objection at all, and even more strange to find a secular State allowing it on religious grounds *only*." (121)

The modern State is strong enough to survive internal and external threats "without a conscript army (as it survives without a conscript bureaucracy), and it will not be a worse State for making itself a testing ground of the quality and reach of the contemporary conscience." (145)

The essay "Prisoners of War: Does the fight continue After the Battle?" reveals the topical quality of this collection and seeks to assert that imprisonment after the Battle may well be looked upon as a respite from the obligations and rigours of War until the Prisoner of War is reclaimed and reinstated by his own country.

The essay "A Day in the Life of a Socialist Citizen" is of particular interest as it shows tellingly that the promises of a better life under Socialism are coupled with regimentation of the individual, where the sense of freedom is supplanted by the sense of duty. "A powerful figure looms behind Marx's hunter, fisherman, shepherd and critic; the busy citizen attending his endless meetings." (230)

Mr. Walzer's essays must be regarded as a notable contribution to Pluralist thought and liberalism; they are contemporary in reference and appeal. ". . . Pluralist citizenship meets the specifications of leftist idealism. This is my own idealism too, and I have tried to defend it throughout this book." (227) The logical difficulties of pluralism are perhaps insurmountable but a logically impeccable system of thought reproduced in institutional terms can have its own dangers for liberty. The logic of liberalism may be broad but not meticulous, for the devotion to detail and mechanical consistency may mean the sacrifice of the principle of indetermination and ultimately of freedom.

"The sentiment of justice is so natural, and so universally acquired by all mankind, that it seems to be independent of all law, all party, all religion."

"A thing may look specious in theory and yet be ruinous in practice."

"'Not men but measures'; a sort of charm by which many people get loose from every honourable engagement."

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THE LAST STRAW

The straw has come between us.
I am living it all
again: being accustomed to pain

is of no help. I confess
I am not myself
in the present. I only endure

a reflected existence
in the past.
It's midnight. A late train

screeches to a halt.
The street hangs
in a loop of moonlight.

On rungs of heavy air I climb
to sleep. The tight
fist of my throat reeks

of the sweat of words: their
unmentionable odour
sustains me. My past is an unperfect

stone: the flaws show. I polish
the stone, sharpen
the lustre to a point.

R. Parthasarathy

INDIAN COMMENTARY

H. M. PATEL

"ASPECTS of India's Foreign Policy", and "India's Constitution and Politics" (Published by Jaico Publishing House, Price Rs. 10 each) are perhaps two of the more remarkable collections of articles that have appeared for quite sometime. Though written at different times during the past few years, they read well and have the mark of study and scholarship, and of deep and independent thinking. Each of them is of much more than ephemeral interest, for the subjects dealt with are of continuing importance, and whatever is said is in consonance with one or other well-established principle of law, or ethics or tradition.

Whether the author is criticising a pronouncement of the Supreme Court or of a Film Censorship Board, whether he is commenting on a constitutional problem or an aspect of our foreign policy, whether he is applying his mind to the grievances of the Muslims or to communal riots, his approach remains equally objective and refreshingly forthright. Moreover, whatever he has to say is not merely well argued, but well documented. In not one of his articles can one find anything slip-shod or inaccurate.

No one can hereafter have any excuse for pleading ignorance or lack of understanding of our foreign policy, or our basic constitutional issues. A careful study of these books would indeed enable a student as also a general reader to have a sound understanding of current public affairs of India.

To readers of *Opinion*, Shri Noorani's writings are well-known. But it is only on reading them in their collected form that even they would have a just and adequate idea of the width and variety of his interests and of the liberalism, humanism and commonsense which distinguish his thinking. Shri A. G. Noorani, the author of these two compilations, deserves our congratulations as also our gratitude.

No summary can be attempted that would do these two books justice : they have to be read. But a few quotations may perhaps help in exonerating the reviewer from the charge of exaggeration, or uncritical praise :

Writing in November 1962, he wrote in an article entitled "Nehru at the Cross-roads of History" : "India, indeed, Asia one might say, will never be the same after the Chinese invarion. Whether a better or a worse state of things than before emerges from this war depends largely on ourselves. No man has a greater responsibility in that behalf than Jawaharlal Nehru. His policies, domestic and external, are now in the crucible. . . ." ". . .Foreign policy must obviously come first in any such thinking. 'After all' as Mr. Nehru told the Lok Sabha on March 17, 1960, 'the foreign policy of any country concerns itself primarily with the

protection of that country, with the protection of its freedom, of its sovereignty, of its integrity. These are the first tests of a foreign policy, and insofar as it is unable to do so, well, it has failed'. The failure of our foreign policy is, therefore, scarcely a matter for argument if it is to be judged by the admirable test propounded by the very author of that policy. What is debetable, however, is whether we should throw over-board non-alignment itself in our disgust with its past practice." . . . .

"More important still we must acquire a correct understanding of the global conflict and the role of the West in it. It is not in our interest to become partners in the political and military conflict and the West under President Kennedy's leadership does not ask us to do so. But we must reckon with the militancy of international communism and the adherence of a whole power bloc to its objectives. Neutralism as a policy is sound : as an ideology it is disastrous and hypocritical. The threat to our freedom is from the East not the West."

"The right course for us is, not to expect foreign support merely because we happen to be in the right, but rather to ascertain what our interests are, which states share them, and how far. If we forge such a community of interest, not necessarily by alliances, we shall secure greater diplomatic support than by any mere advocacy of our rights, however, adroit.

Such an exercise requires a far greater willingness to face realities than we have hitherto. Thus, Mrs. Gandhi said, 'it was wrong to believe that India was saved from being devoured by China because of Western military power. India was saved only because the U.S.S.R. fell out with China. She was sure that if China and Russia joined hands and attacked India the Western powers would not be able to save it.'

As to the first part of her remarks Mr. Khrushchev is a better judge. Speaking in the Supreme Soviet on December 12, 1962, he said : 'some say that China has stopped hostilities apparently because India began to receive support from the American and British imperialists who supply her with arms. Yes, evidently the Chinese friends have taken this circumstance into account, and this again points to their wisdom and understanding of the fact that when war breaks out between friendly neighbouring peoples, the imperialists always try to benefit from it.'

And far from Russia and China having 'fallen out' they were in agreement on the invasion. I know this will shock many but that is only because of our ignorance. In his thoroughly documented work 'The Sino-Soviet Rift,' Prof. William E. Griffith cites the "People's Daily's" editorial of November 2, 1963, and says : 'We now have a November 1963 Chinese (but as yet no Soviet) detailed account of the then secret Moscow-Peking discussion preceding the October 20 Chinese attack. According to it, on October 8, 'a Chinese leader' told the Soviet Ambassador in Peking a 'massive' Indian attack was pending and that Indian use of Soviet-manufactured planes 'was making a bad impression' on the Chinese frontier guards : in reply on October 13 and 14, Krushchev told the Chinese Ambassador in Moscow that the Russians had similar information and

that had the Soviet been in China's position, 'they would have taken the same measures.'

In September 1968, Noorani wrote an article on an interesting and important subject, which he entitled "Sphere of Influence". He begins by asking "Does there, indeed, exist an agreement, tacit or express, between the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. on a division of their respective spheres of influence on this globe?

The question has been frequently asked in the wake of the Warsaw Pact countries' invasion of Czechoslovakia, evoking angry denials of such a pact from American spokesmen.

'Monstrous' and 'ridiculous' are the expressions U.S. Secretary of State Dean Rusk used, on September 9, to characterise reports of such a deal between the super-powers. The matter is of the utmost importance in world politics and deserves the most careful consideration in the light of recent history."

And Noorani then after examining the matter in his characteristic thorough manner, concludes: "If a sphere of influence does exist in any part of the world it is indubitably in Eastern Europe and it exists not by agreement with any other power but by the sheer armed might of Russia.

America has cared not to challenge Russia on this issue because Eastern Europe's importance to its own interests is in utter disproportion to its importance to Russia. But what is to be deplored is that this has bred an attitude of utter helplessness which amounts almost to tacit acceptance of the Soviet sphere. It has paralysed American diplomacy and fostered a certain cynicism.

The only thing that could be said in mitigation is that it is a cynicism which the world at large, the non-aligned included, also shares with regard to the fate of the people of Eastern Europe."

In an article written in July 1968 on the subject of 'The Crisis of Parliament', Noorani asks: "Is Parliament becoming obsolete? The question is being asked anxiously in Britain whose Parliament has served as a model for the legislature of many a country, including ours.

That people in India, too, feel that Parliament did not reflect the people's mood or suit their genius was understandable . . . Mr. N. G. Ranga, leader of the Swatantra Party, wrote to the Prime Minister last April: 'It is on the basis of our experience of the standing committees that we thought a beginning could be made with committees which could really play a constructive role. It is a matter of regret that you advance the untenable plea that the setting up of standing committees would not be in the best interest of our system of Government.'

Mr. Ranga went on to add, 'we fail to appreciate your remark that the practice in the United Kingdom is not of much help. I do not understand the special feature of what you call 'our particular system' which apparently requires that the consultative committees remain as ineffective and informal as they are at present'." . . . "The nub of the matter is that the MP's duty as a watchdog on behalf of the people comes into

conflict with the needs of the Government to get legislation passed.

In modern times it is the Cabinet which controls Parliament. It is the Government which really chalks out the parliamentary time-table. Over the years the backbencher finds himself taking very much a back seat in regard to the running of Parliament.

None of the existing devices—the question, the adjournment motion, the censure motion—adequately serves the purpose.

This is where the committee system helps. It enables the members to keep the administration under *continuous and detailed* surveillance. Modern administration has become so complex that a vast 'knowledge gap' has sprung up between the rulers and the ruled. The former find it easy enough to silence criticism by a highly selective array of facts. The critic, accused plausibly of ignorance, is demoralised." . . . "One fails to understand why Mrs. Gandhi is chary of having a full-blooded committee system. After all, the committee is not supposed to interfere with policy but only over-see its administration. All it can do is to investigate and report to Parliament." . . . "Of course, like any other institution the committee system can be worked to excess. Members might get so engrossed in the details of administration as to neglect policy, which is the prime concern of Parliament.

But the Committee is being suggested because experience has shown that, constituted as it is today, parliamentary control over both policy and its administration is feeble."

In September 1963, Noorani wrote a courageous article on "Disturbing Trends in the Judiciary": "It is a truism that laws are no better than the men who administer them. A state may have the best of codes, but they will be of no avail if its judges are corrupt, incompetent or servile.

The standards of the Indian judiciary are a matter of pride to every citizen. Among the finest institutions we inherited from the British, our judiciary has amply stood the test of the times. Independent, competent and, above all, vigilant, the Indian judge is looked up to when men in other spheres of life have failed.

Yet, complacency is the foe of progress, and it is our duty constantly to study the trends lest, unknown to overselves, one of our greatest assets should deteriorate.

There is a remarkable hesitation among publicists both here and in England in commenting on judges. This is as it should be.

Judges cannot issue rejoinders to answer criticism. Unfair or carping comment can only affect public esteem for the judge and, thus, do immense wrong. At the same time, it is a mistaken notion of public duty to withhold comment when it is sorely called for." . . . "Let us consider first, judicial conduct inside the Court room. One is immediately struck by the economy of judicial courtesy and patience, a spectacle which led one of the most eminent of our living lawyers, Dr. K. M. Munshi to express his disgust at 'frowning judges and fawning lawyers'.

A discourteous judge is a public menace. Confident that he knows the law and the facts, conscious of his own exclusive devotion to justice,

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he disdains the assistance of counsel at the Bar and regards all legal argument as a waste of his precious time. The law irks and irritates him, and it is only because of the compulsion of his oath of office that he listens to these 'technicalities'.

Left to himself, he would dispense—more correctly, dispense with—justice in the grand manner. . . .

'A form of life and conduct far more severe and restricted than that of ordinary people is required from judges, and though unwritten, has been mostly strictly observed. They are at once privileged and restricted. They have to present a continuous aspect of dignity and conduct.'

This 'continuous aspect of dignity and conduct' our rulers have done their best to cloud. It is impossible to understand many of Government's suggestions save on the assumption that they regard the judiciary as an arm of the Executive."

"Mr. Justice S. K. Das was asked to advise the Prime Minister 'personally' on the Malaviya affair. Mr. Nehru made the astounding revelation (August 18) that this was not the first case where the private advice of judges had been sought by Government.

We are entitled to know the previous cases, and the judges who tendered such advice in deplorable secrecy.

The Constitution makes an express provision (article 143) enabling the President to refer a question to the Supreme Court for 'consideration and the Court may, after such hearing as it thinks fit, report to the President its opinion thereon.'

But to permit inquiries of 'a private and confidential character' is to make a mockery of this provision and indeed to degrade the high office of a judges. . . ."

"The judges owe it to themselves no less than to their high office to refuse to do any work outside their strict course of duty. Greater detachment from the Executive is imperative if the situation is not to deteriorate further.

In the words of the great jurist, Ehrlich, 'there is no guarantee of justice except the personality of the Judge'."

In regard to 'Grievances of Indian Muslims', written in July 1965, he has some very wise and thought provoking things to say: "The foundation of our national life the Declaration of the National Integration Council aptly states, is common citizenship, unity in diversity, freedom of religion, secularism, equality, justice—social, economic and political—and fraternity among all communities.

Respect for these values alone can foster national integration. It is clear, that the existence of a marked feeling in any section of the nation that these values do not inform its relationship with the larger whole, that it is getting less than its due, cannot but impair the sense of national unity and create further problems of its own.

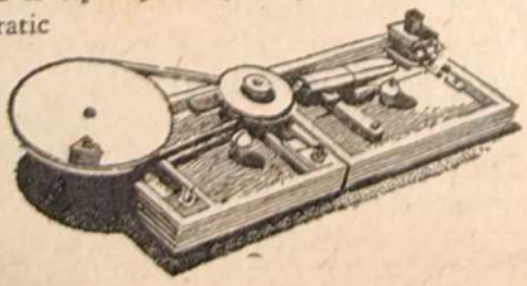
That the Muslims of India have this feeling now needs little proof or elobaration." . . . "Undoubtedly there is both an objective basis for the feeling and also a purely subjective element in the feeling.

This duality is inevitable in any such situation but it is possible to have a sound and realistic appraisal of both elements by a scrupulous and careful regard to the facts and, above all, by the injection of clarity into the discussion.

This is where a listing of the specific Muslim grievances helps. It impels clarity and clarity inspires, in turn, a sense of proportion. But at all times, the purpose of the exercise should not be forgotten. Its purpose is a redress of the grievances in order that national unity may be strengthened. The purpose is not an exploitation of grievances, however real, for other ends. Some of the grievances lend themselves to relatively speedy redress, others in the nature of things require a long term approach. Both, however, call for a sense of urgency if the situation, sad as it is twenty years after independence is not to deteriorate further."

One nation: One people

"There is so much in common between people in the same State, under the same flag and owing undivided allegiance to it... that those who believe in India as a nation can have no minority or majority question. All are entitled to equal privileges, equal treatment... The state of our conception must be a secular, democratic state, having perfect harmony between different units."—*Mahatma Gandhi*



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VINOBA

A. H. DOCTOR

VINOBA has been hailed the world over as one of the greatest men of the century. The well known author and novelist, Arthur Koestler, who has interviewed him thrice described his Bhoodan movement, "As the greatest peace revolution since Gandhi". Bertrand Russell in 1962 invited Vinoba to join the anti-Nuclear march in London and hailed him as the "Symbol of conscience in human affairs." Hallam Tennyson has titled his book on Vinoba "The Saint on the March". This great man celebrated his 75th birthday on 11th September 1970. What better tribute could be paid to him than a comprehensive and up-to-date volume on his life and work? Shriman Narayan's book* is indeed an apt birthday gift to the "Walking Saint."

To most people Vinoba is known as the apostle of peace and non-violence. It is therefore interesting to note that young Vinoba was a contrast to "The gentle saint" of after years. "Once young Vinoba locked the door of the bath room when a friend of his, who was very much habituated to drinking tea, was indoors. He opened the door only after securing a firm promise from the friend that he would give up tea altogether from that day." Vinoba was a great admirer of Tilak and Mazzini and during "those days one of his life's ambitions was to shoot at least one Englishman." Vinoba showed from early life his resolute will and love of 'Swadeshi'. He once refused to take a bath for 14 days because his mother insisted on his using warm water. He refused to use foot-wear. When Vinoba heard of Tilak's imprisonment for six years, he gave up the use of sugar for several years. His love of "swadeshi" can be seen in his apparently rude comment to fellow students who would choose to speak to him in English, viz., "Is your mother English?" Similarly when some celebrated European musicians visited the Baroda College, he sat wondering when he could escape this infliction.

It was in February 1916 that Vinoba's life changed. Having fled from home Vinoba was in two minds whether to go the Himalayas or to join the Bengal revolutionaries, when he happened to read Gandhiji's famous speech delivered on the occasion of laying the foundation stone of the Banaras Hindu University. The report of Gandhi's speech thrilled him and he resolved to meet and join Gandhi. Looking back on those days Vinoba writes, "Providence took me to Gandhiji and I found in him not only the peace of the Himalayas but also the buring fervour typical of Bengal. I said to myself that both of my desires had been fulfilled."

Vinoba's political and economic thinking is greatly influenced by Gandhiji. He has inherited most of Gandhi's preferences and dislikes

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* Vinoba, His Life and Work, Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 1970.

and his Sarvodaya philosophy is an extension and an elaboration of Gandhian political and economic ideals.

Vinoba is against the present political system based on majority rule, elections and political parties. "There was a time", he says, "when minority ruled over majority. As a reaction there emerged an ideology of majority rule over the minority. If the first was a thesis, the second is an anti-thesis. It is now time for a synthesis of 'Government by all'." To achieve this he proposes Village Panchayats to be directly elected and equipped with all the powers to meet the majority of primary and even many of the secondary needs of its residents. This means every Village must aim at being nearly self-sufficient in all its basic needs and its production should be mainly for local consumption. Above the Village Panchayat will be what Vinoba calls the nominal* political organization, viz. the District, Provincial and National Panchayats to be indirectly elected by the members of the lower panchayats. These elections (by Village Panchayats to District; by District Panchayats to Provincial and by Provincial Panchayats to National) should be as far as possible unanimous or by consensus. Similarly the decisions of the various Panchayats should be unanimous. In such a set-up, obviously the need for parties and elections (as well as majority rule) disappear. A lovely picture indeed! But can it work? A number of questions arise. Knowing that the village is not "the happy family" that Vinoba imagines it to be, can we hope for consensus in the selection of candidates? What is the guarantee that unanimous elections will not go against the traditionally downtrodden communities who will be easily "persuaded" into accepting higher caste or wealthier members of the village community? Then, how are the members coming from fifty or more district Panchayats in Uttar Pradesh (some quite far off from others) to discover the "best servants" for nomination to the Provincial Panchayat? Regarding unanimity in decisions, this is possible at the village level in matters relating to sanitation, hygene etc., but can one necessarily expect it at the Provincial or National level where decisions have to be taken on both ends (shall we spend more on defence or development) and the means to realize the ends? Vinoba's proposition that in case unanimity is not possible the matter be postponed or settled by lots can hardly apply in situations where urgency is crucial (as when threatened with aggression, economic calamity).

Shriman Narayan does not remove our doubts on any of these points. No doubt he cites Nehru who confesses, "Frankly I am not sure whether the system of indirect elections at higher levels would really work. It may raise in turn a crop of new difficulties and complications." (p. 310) Shrimanji himself agrees with Nehru's doubts (p. 247), but is silent on the possibility of unanimity and of the dangers inherent on its insistence,

* Nominal since the real power is to belong to the village (lower) Panchayats—the "higher" panchayats are to have less real power and more moral force and duty of co-ordination.

viz. the stifling of genuine dissent. After all it cannot be seriously held that there is only one correct solution to every problem.

Similarly one may disagree with Vinoba's various economic reforms and proposals such as "Kanchan-mukti" (freedom from the present monetary system and its replacement by barter and payment in kind or by a "depreciating paper currency"), production only for local consumption, maximum village self-sufficiency etc. The only thing that can be said in Vinoba's favour is that his economic order (Simple Economy) is consistent with his political order; both aim at making for "near autonomous", almost sovereign, village units. One may however find it difficult to concur with Vinoba's inferences—a nation practising a simple and self-sufficient economy will not tempt invasion from outside; High thinking is possible only in the context of simple (marginal) living, etc.

Vinoba is truly "A Mobile University" and during his "pad-yatras" he lectures on and discusses numerous themes—Non-alignment, Communism, Planning, Untouchability, Family Planning and a host of other subjects.

It is interesting for instance to note Vinoba's views on Indian Communists. He says, "It is a complete misnomer to call them Communists. I do not see in what they have done in India anything even remotely resembling Communism. Whatever little they have done was done in Telengana and there continuously for two or three years murder, pillage and banditry were the order of the day. And the result was that peasants did not get anything at all. That is why I hold that the Communists in India are mere propagandists, and that they do no constructive work at all. They are no doubt very enthusiastic about propaganda. The Communists in India are not only materialists, they have also developed what we may call a material intelligence—their intelligence is as dense as matter. . . . If Russia changes its line of action, they do likewise. They have no independent intelligence of their own. How can we have any opinion, good or bad, about a person who is merely copying others?"

Vinoba condemns Communists for their dogmatic attitude. "Communism with the Communists is not a living thought. They have turned it into a dogma based on a book. Like the Arya Samajists they pin their faith on that book and take leave of both the existing conditions in a given place and their intelligence. . . . I tell the Communists that you may be Marxists, but Marx was not a Marxist. He was simply Marx and therefore he could change."

Vinoba does not think that "Gandhism is Communism minus violence". "The fact of the matter is that these two ideologies are irreconciable; the differences between them are fundamental." Vinoba insists that the welfare of society depends on man's character and his moral quality. The social structure changes its form along with the development of human character. The creed and ideology of the Communists is the opposite of this, viz moral virtues are not creations of the mind, but results of environment; the mind itself being the result of environment.

One may not agree with every aspect of Vinoba's views on

Planning and Economic development—for instance, his opposition to government undertaking a Family Planning drive. "Servants of the people have no business to tell their masters as to how many sons and daughters they should have", says Vinoba. But his two criticisms warrant attention. Vinoba is against a centralized plan and concentration of economic power in the hands of government. Vinoba is not against the private sector. In fact, he would not like the State to take over too many basic industries because that would lead to excessive concentration of economic power, which inevitably leads to concentration of political power as well. Criticising the planners for their heavy dependence on foreign aid, he caustically remarks, "Yours is a plan involving perpetual begging . . . it cannot inspire anybody to produce more."

On the Chinese aggression and threat Vinoba asserts, "If we want to repel the invaders successfully, we must counteract them with a superior ideology of Sarvodaya." The threat cannot be met by military action alone but must be met on the economic and social planes as well. "Hunger within the country was a greater danger than the aggression of China on the borders." It is also interesting to note Vinoba's view that, "Chinese aggression is a clear instance of expansionism. It is not Communism. While committing this act of expansionism China may talk of Communism to win the sympathies of certain nations. But such expansionist ambitions in the present age will lead only to utter destruction. . . . Chinese aggression against India is therefore absolutely wrong. It is not befitting even from the point of view of Communism. My sympathies are thus with India. I say this not as an Indian, but as a citizen of the world who believes in 'Jai Jagat'."

Vinoba is personally committed to non-violence, but does not hesitate to endorse the use of armed forces against China. "When India maintains an army, it has to be used to repel an armed attack." Yet Vinoba does not hesitate to exhort nations to disarm. In a speech in 1958 he said, "In this age of Science we must cut down armaments, even at the risk of losing our Independence. I make bold to say this because the very concepts of freedom and bondage have lost their traditional significance."

After the Chinese aggression, when some began to argue that non-alignment was out-moded and "even Pandit Nehru was rather overwhelmed and was, for some time, in two minds", it was Vinoba (so Shriman Narayan tells us) who by his unqualified support for non-alignment made Nehru come back to the old path. In a letter on 28th November 1962 Vinoba wrote in detail about why India should stay non-aligned and how it was India's non-involvement that had saved India from a longdrawn out war with China. "The letter was indeed very timely and strengthened the hands of the Prime Minister who went to the extent of reading it out to his colleagues at one of the Cabinet meetings."

On Pakistan and the problem of Kashmir, Vinoba's attitude is fraternal but unrealistic. He is firmly opposed to any division of the state though he is for maximum autonomy to the sate within the Indian

union. He once told Sheikh Abdulla, when the latter came to meet him at Wardha, "It is spirituality and not politics which would lead to a satisfactory solution. . . Kashmir has been an integral part of India for a long time. A solution for the future of Kashmir must therefore be found within the framework of the Indian Constitution. Any attempt to separate Kashmir from the Indian Union will have serious repercussions throughout the country." He once enquired of Nehru whether some loose confederation between India and Pakistan could be contemplated. If this is achieved, Vinoba asserted, the Kashmir problem would get automatically solved. But the obvious fact is that the mutual suspicion and fears of the two countries and the hostility of Pakistan make any talk of "confederation" unrealistic. Further, it may only strengthen Pakistan's irrational fears of India and thus instead of taking us any nearer the solution of Kashmir, it would only aggravate the tensions between the two countries.

But Vinoba of course does not seriously believe that there is any real hostility or fear between the two nations. This seems obvious from the following incident narrated by Shriman Narayan: "During his tour in Kashmir Vinoba walked on several occasions very near the cease-fire line where Indian troops were guarding the borders day and night. While he appreciated the patriotism and loyalty of these Jawans, he felt sorry that the Indian troops deployed all along the line had to idle away their time simply because of mutual fear and suspicion between India and Pakistan. On the other side of the cease-fire line could be seen the Pakistani troops similarly patrolling the borders all the twenty-four hours. When somebody pointed out to Vinoba a white jeep with the inscription 'United Nations' he remarked: 'And so here is a third lot of idle men. What a large number of idle people have gathered together near the cease-fire line'."

[A saint? Maybe but of the type whose prescriptions can only be effective when the kingdom of God has taken over the earth, not when the Devil is still fighting hard for dominance and has to be kept at bay by ordinary human beings. One simple practical measure like holding the population would mean much more for the progress of the country and the happiness of the people than all the mirages our attractive visionaries, even those who habitually use simple language and down-to-earth images, ponder over and describe at length.—*Ed.*]

BOOK-SALES

BAHIRJI

'THE sales of Marathi books are very meagre,' how often have we not heard this said in various tones of voice, blandly, affirmatively, despairingly, challengingly ? But the statement is just not correct. Sales here do not compare unfavourably with sales in other parts of the world, even in advanced countries like the U.S.A., England or France. The normal sale of an ordinary book in these countries is five thousand copies ; in Maharashtra it is one to two thousand copies. The time taken to sell these quantities is about the same in both cases. One to two thousand is certainly less than five thousand, but we cannot take these figures just by themselves. The population of the U.S.A. is 16 crores, 80 to 85 per cent being literate and at least 50 per cent of the literate sufficiently educated to read and appreciate books. Thus the reading class in the U.S. is about 5 to 6 crores. The total Marathi speaking population being six crores and only 40 per cent being literate, the total reading class cannot be more than one crore. If with 6 crore readers sales are 5,000 copies, the sale figure of one to two thousand with a reading public of one crore, is surely not meagre.

But the critic will object "Think of the very large number of books, magazines, journals in the U.S.A. It is that which brings down the sale figures of individual books. We don't have even a quarter of that number here". To which the answer is "Think of the American living standard. An ordinary American earns thirty times an ordinary Indian's income. Also the middle class which is the real buyer of books, is very large in that country. Here the middle class is an insignificant minority".

Very good, but we still want more sales of Marathi books, so what should we do ? The reading habit can be spread only among literates, so the basis is increase of literacy. Accordingly participate in literacy campaigns, at least help those who do. Also keep up a constant pressure on Government and legislator so that the tempo of making literates is increased. Side by side with this, we must have books on the American "Ladder" pattern, to keep the newly-literate person literate and form in him the habit of reading books. Also catch the young literate. Let publishers form groups of children from six to twenty, give each ten books, and after a time, hold a competitive exam with handsome prizes for each age-group. They will have made readers for life to their own eventual benefit. Similar competitions can be held among teams from universities, to the members of which too, a selection of books has been given.

To sell in large numbers books have to be cheap. American experience may provide some guidelines to Indian publishers. In the U.S. the price of a cheap book varies from 50 cents to 4 dollars, i.e., from the cost of two cups of coffee to that of a cinema or drama ticket. The pro-

duction values of the costlier book are better. It can be read and handle for years, while the pages of the other often fall out on the third readin or even earlier. Marathi publishers too ought to think in terms of simila prices, and if they say they can't, costs are too high, let them tackle the Government vigorously and get paper prices reduced.

Another way of increasing book-sales would be to make people regard books as a status symbol. The tendency is there already. The late Dr. Ketkar's Encyclopædia is a case in point. Very few people bought it to read it or even to refer to it. Dr. Ketkar's name had a certain aura around it, and so they bought it as a matter of social prestige. This kind of thing needs to be encouraged, so that respect is gained by possessing large private libraries and a man prides himself on the books, number and quality, he has accumulated. Nor need this be necessarily thought cynical. A great scholar, known as much for his gay habits as for his deep learning, used to say that books were as insiduous in their own way as wine in its. If a man had books around him, sooner or later he would find himself reading them with real enjoyment.

A matter that needs prompt attention if sales are to be made to go up is the high cost in our country of the carriage of books. A villager ordering a book may have to pay two rupees postage charges on a book priced at four rupees. This is absurd and ought to be remedied forthwith by Government. There is not much point in paying lipsympathy to the cause of education and reading and then behaving in this very step-motherly manner. Our authorities seem yet not to have realised that "A good book is the precious life-blood of a master spirit, embalmed and treasured up on purpose to a life beyond life" and that "The true University of these days is a collection of books."

(Continued from page 5)

own sake, continually and equably. The days to come may be extremely irksome and perilous. Indian rulers may well kneel heavily on the neck of Indian citizens to do homage to their foreign patrons. If there is to be any salvation, it can come only from the courage that holds life to be merely a temporary gift, and the desire to do right for its own sake whatever the odds, basic to living itself. And if salvation be not the will of Providence for us and suffering in ample measure be our lot, even then in these two alone is there any likelihood of some alleviation of the country's and people's suffering.

OPINION

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